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# **The Soviet Military Leadership Succession: Likely Heirs and Policy Implications**

**An Intelligence Assessment**

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*February 1984*

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# The Soviet Military Leadership Succession: Likely Heirs and Policy Implications

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [redacted]  
Office of Soviet Analysis. It was coordinated with the  
Directorate of Operations. [redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
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**The Soviet Military  
Leadership Succession:  
Likely Heirs and  
Policy Implications**

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**Key Judgments**

*Information available  
as of 10 January 1984  
was used in this report.*

We expect three of the seven top policymaking positions in the Soviet military to be vacated over the next five years. In our best judgment, there will be a natural turnover—that is, the changes will follow the normal course of military succession after a death or retirement.

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Which particular officers will advance depends in part on subjective determinants, such as their policy positions and their personal relationships with senior political officials. These factors are hard to assess; but there are also a number of objective determinants, which can be observed in the careers of many successful officers. These include Communist Party status, ethnic origin, service with the Ground Forces, high-visibility postings, and service outside the Warsaw Pact.

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On the basis of these criteria, we have identified 10 officers whom we judge to have the best prospects for reaching the top. In a natural turnover (that is, without firings prompted by radical policy changes), we would expect to see Defense Minister Ustinov replaced by one of three Marshals—Ogarkov, Petrov, or Kulikov—and First Deputy Minister of Defense Sokolov replaced by Petrov or Akhromeyev. The third position most likely to open up soon is that of chief of the Main Political Directorate Yepishev, but his successor is far less clear; he probably will be a party official or a political officer. Once the succession process has begun, Generals Gribkov, Varennikov, Govorov, Sorokin, Zaytsev, and Mayorov would be front-runners who could advance to other key posts.

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From a policy standpoint, the 10 leading candidates fall into three general categories:

- Ogarkov, Akhromeyev, and Varennikov have a General Staff perspective, concerned chiefly with the Soviet Union's ability to fight and win a major war against the United States. They see this confrontation in broad terms, entailing not only the military but also the social, scientific, economic, and political mobilization of the society, and they insist that full preparations for such future conflicts be completed in peacetime.
- The troop commanders—Petrov, Zaytsev, Sorokin, and Govorov—concentrate on military power projection and are less interested in the societal and economic support structure it requires. Taking a more traditional view of their trade, they stress the importance of winning battles, no matter where or against whom.

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- Mayorov, Kulikov, and Gribkov form the "other" category. Mayorov emphasizes the crucial impact of national economic health on long-term Soviet military potency, but he is also notably aggressive and apparently willing to pursue Soviet adventures in the Third World. Kulikov appears less interested in the military consequences of national economic problems—he continues to demand substantial growth in defense spending. Gribkov's career has been predominantly in staff jobs, [redacted]

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Given a normal military succession, we expect to see the advancement of deputies who already share most of the views of their superiors and will not attempt to institute substantial changes. The primary beneficiaries of such a turnover will be Ogarkov, Akhromeyev, and Varennikov. [redacted]

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If Andropov (or a successor like party secretaries Gorbachev or Romanov) seeks to change defense policy, he might advance some of the other seven among the top 10 contenders. The selection of a more traditional commander, such as Petrov or Zaytsev, could signal greater activism in the Third World. An officer well suited to a period of change might be Mayorov, who has impressive abilities and a past role as a tough enforcer of Soviet policy. Such unorthodox promotions appear unlikely, however.

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All these soldiers seem to recognize that things have changed substantially since the Brezhnev era. Then, the political leadership could give them almost everything they wanted; now, most of the military leaders recognize that they must be realistic about the need to deal with resource constraints. Because there is a consensus on this issue among both political and military leaders, Andropov or his successor probably will not choose to interfere with the normal military succession process. [redacted]

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### The Soviet Military Leadership Succession: Likely Heirs and Policy Implications

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Over the next five years there is likely to be a significant turnover in the top leadership positions in the Soviet Ministry of Defense due to death or retirement. This turnover could be greater if Yuriy Andropov (or a successor) chose to recast the military leadership—whether to facilitate some major policy shift (as by altering the rate of growth in defense spending or promoting new arms control initiatives) or simply to establish his political dominance over the military. [ ]

Changes at the summit of the Ministry could have a significant impact on Soviet military policy. Our study of the possible changes involves:

- Describing the apparent career requirements for reaching the top of the military hierarchy.
- Identifying those officers whom we believe are likely to be appointed to key policymaking positions over the next five years.
- Assessing the career experiences and writings or speeches of this pool of overachievers in order to evaluate their policy predilections.
- Gauging the impact they may have on the future orientation of Soviet national security policy.<sup>1</sup> [ ]

#### The Military Hierarchy

The Soviet military hierarchy consists of approximately 100 key leadership positions, the most important of which are shown in the figure. At its apex are seven men who occupy the top posts in the Defense Ministry and the General Staff of the Armed Forces (table 1). In addition to their strictly military responsibilities, these officers are regular participants with the top political leaders of the USSR in setting policy on national security issues such as arms control and the defense budget. [ ]

<sup>1</sup> This analysis is based primarily on an examination of the careers of approximately 130 present or recent incumbents of high-level military positions and on their writings and public statements.

Just below this exclusive group is a set of 12 influential officers who, like their superiors, are members of the Defense Collegium—the Ministry's policymaking council. These are the 11 deputy ministers of defense and First Deputy Chief of the General Staff Anatoliy Gribkov. Five of the deputy ministers serve concurrently as commanders in chief of the five branches of the Armed Services. These 12 play a supporting role in shaping national policy on military issues with important economic implications such as weapons development and procurement. [ ]

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The remaining 80 or so members of the hierarchy are limited in their authority to purely military matters and tend to concentrate on matters of doctrine, operational planning, and organization of the armed forces. These include:

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- The first deputy commanders and the chiefs of staff of the five armed services.
- The commanders, first deputy commanders, and chiefs of staff of the five major joint services commands, (that is, the German, Northern, Central, and Southern Groups of Forces and the Forces of the Far East).
- The commanders, first deputy commanders, and chiefs of staff of the 16 military districts of the USSR.
- The commanders, first deputy commanders, and chiefs of staff of the four major naval commands (the Northern, Pacific, Baltic, and Black Sea Fleets).
- The deputy chiefs of the General Staff.
- The commandants of the most important military academies. [ ]

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## Soviet Defense Ministry: Key Positions

### Collegium

Minister of Defense: Ustinov

First Deputy Minister of Defense and Chief of the General Staff: Ogarkov

First Deputy Minister of Defense and Commander in Chief  
of the Joint Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact: Kulikov

First Deputy Minister of Defense for General Matters: Sokolov

Chief, Main Political Directorate of Army and Navy: Yepishev

Deputy Ministers of Defense:

Altunin	Petrov
Gorshkov	Shabanov
Koldunov	Shkadov
Kurkotkin	Shestopalov
Kutakhov	Tolubko
Moskalenko	

### General Staff

Chief: Ogarkov

First Deputies: Akhromeyev  
Gribkov  
Varennikov

### Military Advisory Group in Afghanistan

Chief: Sorokin

### Air Defense Forces

Chief: Koldunov

First Deputies: Chesnokov  
Romanov  
Yurasov

### Ground Forces

Chief: Petrov

First Deputies: Mayorov  
Grinkevich

### Strategic Rocket Forces

Chief: Tolubko

First Deputies: Vishenkov  
Yashin

### Air Forces

Chief: Kutakhov

First Deputies: Skorikov  
Yefimov

### Naval Forces

Chief: Gorshkov

First Deputies: Smirnov  
Chernavin

### Military Districts

Commanders: Baltic—Postnikov  
Belorussian—Ivanovskiy  
Carpathian—Belikov  
Central Asian—Yazov  
Far East—Tret'yak  
Kiev—Gerasimov  
Leningrad—Snetkov  
Moscow—Lushev  
North Caucasus—Meretskov  
Odessa—Yelagin  
Siberian—Popov  
Transbaykal—Salmanov  
Transcaucasus—Arkipov  
Turkestan—Maksimov  
Ural—Tyagunov  
Volga—Ryakhov

### Groups of Forces

Commanders: Central—Borisov  
Germany—Zaytsev  
Northern—Zarudin  
Southern—Kochetov

### Far Eastern Troops

Commander: Govorov



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**Table 1**  
**The Top Seven**

Position	Incumbent and Rank	Date of Birth	Age
Minister of Defense	Marshal of the Soviet Union D. F. Ustinov	30 October 1908	75
First Deputy Minister of Defense and Chief of the General Staff	Marshal of the Soviet Union N. V. Ogarkov	30 October 1917	66
First Deputy Minister of Defense	Marshal of the Soviet Union V. G. Kulikov	5 July 1921	62
First Deputy Minister of Defense	Marshal of the Soviet Union S. L. Sokolov	1 July 1911	72
First Deputy Chief of the General Staff	Marshal of the Soviet Union S. F. Akhromeyev	5 May 1923	60
First Deputy Chief of the General Staff and Chief of the Main Opera- tions Directorate	General of the Army V. I. Varennikov	15 December 1923	60
Chief of the Main Political Direc- torate of the Army and Navy	General of the Army A. A. Yepishev	19 April 1908	75

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### Ascending the Ladder

The Soviet officers who eventually will replace those now holding the seven top positions probably are already members of this hierarchy.<sup>2</sup> For a military officer the prerequisites for success are fairly straightforward:

- Membership in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).
- Slavic (preferably Great Russian) origin.
- Service with the Ground Forces.
- Graduation from the General Staff Academy.

Several other factors apparently contribute to success, though not all top officials meet all of the tests. These include:

- *Success in high-visibility postings* such as command of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) or the Soviet Forces in the Far East. Service in these two areas is important because the Soviets consider them the most likely sites for a future conflict.

- *Foreign service (outside the Warsaw Pact).* A growing number of commanders of Soviet military districts and groups of forces have worked with military advisory activities (MAAs) in the Third World. As such experience becomes more widespread, it may become a prerequisite for certain national-level troop command positions.
- *An established profile in troop command or staff positions.* Historically, those with command as opposed to staff experience have had a better chance to reach the top of the Soviet military. The General Staff's command and control functions are growing more sophisticated, however, and so is its responsibility for technological support of the operating forces; and this increases the importance on the national level of staff officers with experience in these areas. This change could differentiate the two career paths more sharply and favor those with extensive staff experience.

<sup>2</sup> The only two assignments for which a civilian might be a candidate are those of Minister of Defense and chief of the Ministry's Main Political Directorate. The current Minister, Marshal D. F. Ustinov, was a specialist in defense industries rather than a career military officer, and the political directorate is really a party position.

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**Table 2**  
**The Key Contenders**

Name	Age at End of 1983	Current Position
Nikolay Vasil'yevich Ogarkov	66	First Deputy Minister of Defense, Chief of the General Staff
Viktor Georgiyevich Kulikov	62	First Deputy Minister of Defense, Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact Forces
Sergey Fedorovich Akhromeyev	60	First Deputy Chief of the General Staff
Anatoliy Ivanovich Gribkov	64	First Deputy Commander of the General Staff and First Deputy Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact Forces
Valentin Ivanovich Varennikov	60	First Deputy Chief of the General Staff and Chief of the Main Operations Directorate
Vasiliy Ivanovich Petrov	66	Deputy Minister of Defense and Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces
Vladimir Leonidovich Govorov	59	Commander of Far Eastern Troops
Mikhail Ivanovich Sorokin	61	Chief military adviser in Afghanistan
Mikhail Mitrofanovich Zaytsev	60	Commander in Chief of the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany
Aleksandr Mikhaylovich Mayorov	63	First Deputy Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces

• *Important military and political patrons.* An officer faces a great deal of competition at several points in his career: selection for the General Staff Academy, for example, or movement from command of an army to a post as deputy commander of a military district (MD). Even a highly qualified officer cannot pass these choke points without the active aid of political or military patrons.

• *Membership in the CPSU Central Committee.* Some men have become military policy makers without first achieving this status, but membership in this party body clearly is helpful as an indicator of importance and political patronage.

• *Upward momentum.* Because Soviet officials are loath to retire, headroom is scarce, but those who aspire to the top must advance briskly. Men like Nikolay Ogarkov or Sergey Akhromeyev, destined for the highest Defense Ministry positions, moved from midlevel to high-level positions at a very rapid clip. Moreover, each career move of a successful officer should contribute to an upward progression. Lateral moves often mean that a career has reached its limit.

### The Principal Contenders

Examination of the careers of the officers now in the hierarchy suggests that there are at least 10 whose general conformity with the factors noted above gives them an objective prospect for further advancement. Table 2 lists these men, and table 3 shows their correlations with the criteria for success.<sup>3</sup>

### The Prospects for Succession

#### In the Highest Echelons

Assuming there are no firings prompted by important policy shifts, we expect that age or health problems will open up at least three of the seven policymaking

<sup>3</sup> Five other officers—Generals Y. F. Ivanovskiy, P. G. Lushev, Ye. P. Maksimov, G. I. Salmanov, and I. M. Tret'yak—meet most of the criteria and are therefore possible darkhorse candidates. However, these men also have some evident liabilities, including lack of recent career advancement, reported poor relations with senior military leaders, or allegations of poor performance.

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**Table 3**  
**The Contenders and the Criteria for Success**

Name	CPSU	Ethnic Origin	General Staff Service	Ground Forces Service	Significant MD or Groups of Forces Postings	Non-Warsaw Pact Foreign Service	Career Profile	Probable Military Postings	Rank	Central Committee Membership
Ogarkov	Yes	Russian	Yes	Yes	Volga		Command/staff	M. V. Zakharov V. A. Penkovskiy R. Ya. Malinovsky	Marshal of the Soviet Union	Full
Kulikov	Yes	Russian	Yes	Yes	GSFG	Ghana	Command/staff	P. K. Koshevoy A. A. Grechko	MSU	Full
Akhromeyev	Yes	Russian	Yes	Yes	Never commanded an MD; was C/S of Far East MD		Staff	V. I. Petrov V. G. Kulikov N. V. Ogarkov	MSU	Full
Gribov	Yes	Russian	Yes	Yes	Leningrad		Staff	S. M. Shtemenko	Army General	Full
Varennikov	Yes	Russian	Yes	Yes	Carpathian		Command/staff	Ye. F. Ivanovskiy	Army General	None
Petrov	Yes	Russian	Yes	Yes	Far East MD and Far Eastern Forces	Ethiopia	Command	I. G. Pavlovskiy	MSU	Full
Govorov	Yes	Russian	Yes	Yes	Far Eastern		Command	M. I. Nedelin L. A. Govorov V. G. Kulikov	Army General	Full
Sorokin	Yes	Russian	Yes	Yes	Leningrad	Afghanistan	Command	I. M. Tret'yak	Army General	Candidate
Zaytsev	Yes	Russian	Yes	Yes	GSFG		Command	I. M. Tret'yak	Army General	Full
Mayorov	Yes	Russian	Yes	Yes	Baltic	Afghanistan	Command	I. G. Pavlovskiy	Army General	None

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positions over the next five years. These positions are those of Minister of Defense Dmitriy Ustinov, First Deputy Minister of Defense Sergey Sokolov, and Chief of the Main Political Directorate Aleksey Yepishev. [ ]

When the national political leadership chooses replacements for these men, the choice will depend in large measure on subjective factors such as personal relationships and judgments about a candidate's capacity to be a team player. Nevertheless, our analysis of career patterns [ ]

[ ] suggests that the heir to the position of Minister of Defense, if it is a military figure, is most likely to be Ogarkov, Vasiliy Petrov, or Viktor Kulikov.<sup>4</sup> To take Sokolov's job as a First Deputy Minister of Defense, we see either Petrov or Akhromeyev as

<sup>4</sup> Although most of the Defense Ministers have been from the military, there can be exceptions—such as Ustinov himself. [ ]

good possibilities. For Yepishev's replacement, the picture is far less clear. The successor could be a Communist Party official or a political officer now serving in the Defense Ministry. [ ]

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Changes in these three posts will create ripples throughout the higher echelon of the military hierarchy, as others move up to fill in the vacated positions. Our analysis of possible secondary shifts suggests the following heirs to key positions:

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- Chief of the General Staff, if Ogarkov is advanced: Akhromeyev, Kulikov, or Valentin Varennikov.
- Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact Forces, if Kulikov is advanced: Gribkov, Petrov, or Mikhail Zaytsev.
- First deputy chief of the General Staff, if Akhromeyev is advanced: Varennikov or Gribkov.
- Chief of the Main Operations Directorate, if Varennikov is advanced: a wide range of candidates. A fast-moving MD commander or chief of staff could be chosen. [ ]

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**In the Services**

At the second echelon of the Ministry of Defense, near-term personnel turnover is also possible among the service commanders in chief. Adm. Sergey Gorshkov, the 27-year veteran Commander in Chief of the Navy, is 73 years old. Fleet Adm. Vladimir Chernavin, Chief of the Naval Staff since February 1982, seems to have the nod as heir apparent to Gorshkov. Chernavin's career momentum and public profile have increased as those of his fellow First Deputy, Fleet Adm. Nikolay Smirnov, have languished. Chernavin was promoted to his present rank in November 1983. [ ]

The other service chiefs are not expected to be replaced in the near future because, by Soviet standards, they are still in their prime. Their eventual successors, however, are fairly apparent. For example:

- Chief Marshal of Aviation Pavel Kutakhov, Commander in Chief of the Soviet Air Forces (SAF), 69, is most likely to be succeeded by one of his two first deputies, Marshals of Aviation Grigoriy Skorikov and Aleksandr Yefimov.

- The Commander in Chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF) is Marshal of Artillery Vladimir Tolubko, who is also 69. Tolubko was promoted to marshal in April 1983 and, although he did not receive the highest rank (Marshal of the Soviet Union), his advancement nonetheless signaled his good odor in the Andropov period. His best placed potential successors are the first deputies, Col. Gen. Yuriy Yashin (a comparative youngster at 53) and 61-year-old Col. Gen. Vladimir Vishenkov.
- The position of Ground Forces Commander in Chief has historically been an entree to the highest Defense Ministry positions. The incumbent is Marshal of the Soviet Union Vasiliy Petrov, 67, and the most likely successor appears to be his first deputy, Gen. Aleksandr Mayorov. [ ]

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In the Air Defense Forces the leadership situation is far less certain, as a result of the shootdown of the Korean Air Lines 747 in September 1983. There have been abundant rumors that the Air Defense Commander, Marshal of Aviation Aleksandr Koldunov, 67, is in disfavor. This is possible, although the similar KAL incident in 1978 did not stimulate a personnel reshuffle at the national level (Koldunov was PVO first deputy at that time). If the incident has made Koldunov assailable, it may also have affected the careers of his first deputies, Col. Gen. Yuriy Chesnokov and Col. Gen. Yevgeniy Yurasov, as well as his chief of staff, Col. Gen. Semen Romanov. Thus the PVO succession question seems highly fluid. [ ]

#### **What Differences Would Personnel Changes Make?**

Personnel turnovers of the kind described may not in themselves produce any dramatic changes in Soviet military policies, at least in the near term. But, just as the combination of Ustinov and Ogarkov—now in its seventh year—has shown specific policy biases, so too

the pairing of a new Minister of Defense and General Staff Chief could produce a shift in emphasis and in the military's contribution to national security deliberations. [ ]

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We have examined the policy predilections of the 10 leading aspirants and found several areas of agreement and divergence. These provide some clues to the potential effect that top-level personnel changes could have on military policy. [ ]

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#### **The Common Orientation of Soviet Military Leaders**

The writings and pronouncements of the front-running military officers have a great deal of consistency. Their collective writings and speeches highlight a group of issues about which the military hierarchy generally seems to agree. [ ]

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**Toward Resource Allocations**

The writings of the upcoming military leaders, especially since the late 1970s, suggest that they clearly understand the reduced growth rate of the Soviet national economy. Naturally, they still remain insistent about the need for adequate outlays for defense and hope to insulate military needs from the problems that beset the civilian economy. They all assert that the current US administration is promoting escalation in armaments as a direct challenge to the gains made by the Soviet military during the 1970s. Furthermore, they argue that the military must have access to the resources it needs for competition with the West.

**Toward Technological Competition and Arms Control**

These military leaders consistently contend that their ability to provide for Soviet national security is predicated on having state-of-the-art military hardware. It is in this context, presumably, that the next generation of Soviet military leadership would see merit in

arms control agreements. By reining in specific US development programs or by closely defining the areas of technological competition, such agreements could reduce the Soviets' need to use scarce resources and improve their chances of achieving technological parity or superiority.

**Toward National Combat Readiness**

The writings of these officers reveal great apprehension about the prospect of large-scale military conflict and surprise attack. They are concerned by the deterioration of US-Soviet relations and by the prospect of new weapons such as air-, sea-, and ground-launched cruise missiles, a new generation of US strategic missiles, and possible space-based defenses against ballistic missiles.

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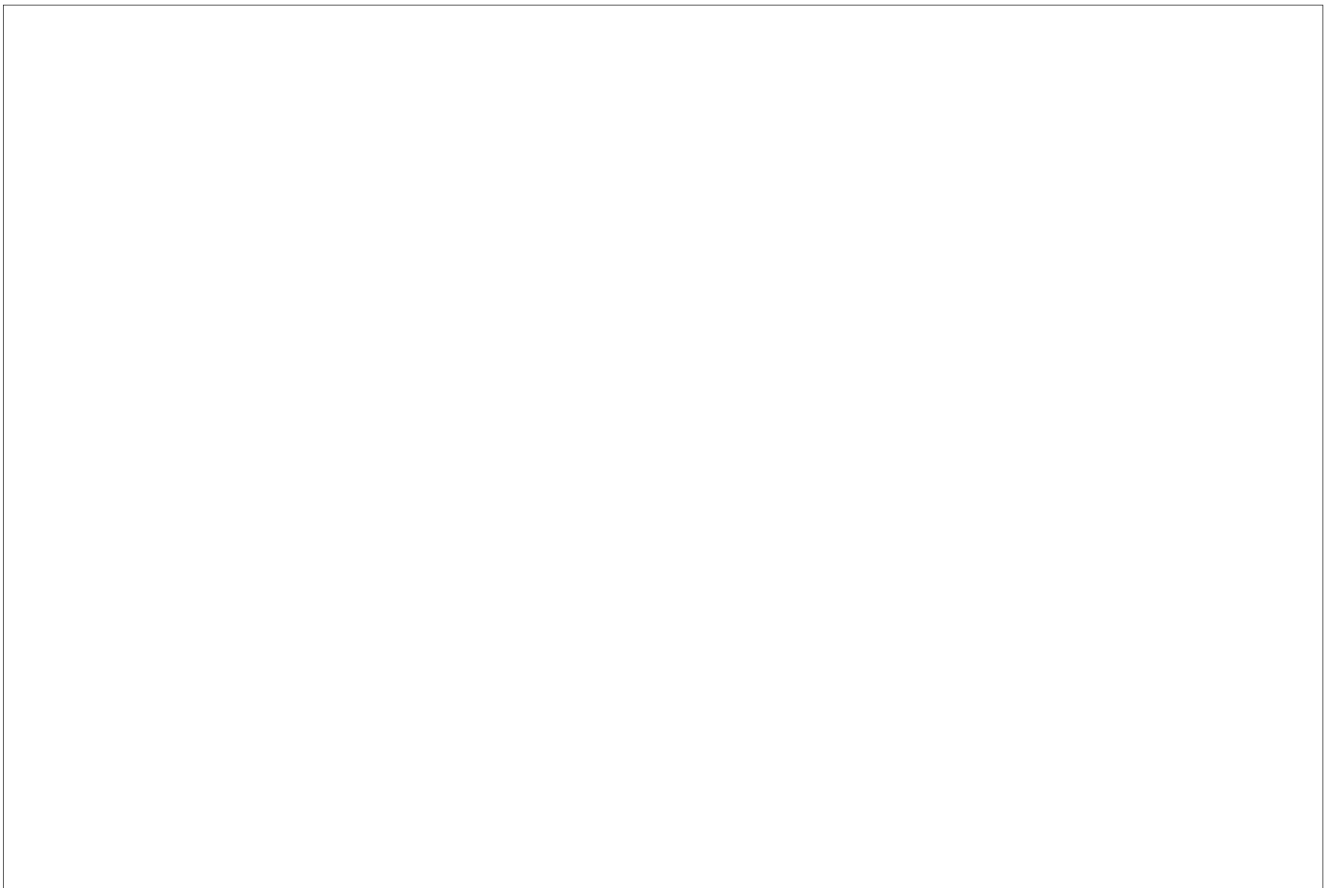
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In response, besides seeking more resources and advanced technology, the military leaders are pushing changes in organization and doctrine designed to increase national combat readiness. For example:

- They have sought to establish the peacetime forces of the USSR in a new organizational framework, which would facilitate wartime operations. Moreover, they are moving to fine tune both the Soviet and the Warsaw Pact command structures so that they too will respond efficiently to a wartime environment.

- [redacted] the more threatening international environment is forcing a retreat from the concepts of escalation control with which the Soviets experimented in the 1970s. [redacted]

#### **Toward the Leading Role of the Party**

As might be expected, all 10 military officers affirm that Party control of military policy is a precept of proven value to the state and one that is fully accepted by the military leadership. Their writings consistently reiterate that the party deserves the credit for the Soviet victory in World War II and, more recently, for the array of weaponry that has given the USSR parity with the West. [redacted]

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#### **Toward Interservice Cooperation**

It is agreed among these front-running officers that cooperation among services is the key to combat victory. They attribute military inadequacies in World War II, such as the breakdown of defense early in the war and the prolongation of the Leningrad blockade, to a lack of such cooperation. Inherent in their views is the condemnation of any branch that might seek an independent battle role. [redacted]

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**Table 4**  
**The Range of Divergent Views Within**  
**the Defense Ministry Hierarchy**

Attitudes toward individual party leaders	Ogarkov, Varennikov: Concern for military competence in the political leadership	Govorov: Concern about changes in political leadership	Akhromeyev, Gribkov, Kulikov: Apparent lack of concern with leadership and policy changes
Attitudes toward future military conflicts	Ogarkov, Varennikov, Kulikov, Mayorov: Concern for national survival		Sorokin, Zaytsev, Petrov: Concern for the requirements of military engagements
Attitudes on the uses of Soviet military power	Ogarkov, Akhromeyev: Concerned with traditional conflict	Kulikov, Gribkov, Govorov: Concerned with traditional Eurasian adversaries	Mayorov, Sorokin, Zaytsev, Petrov: Concerned with power projection
Attitudes toward defense allocations and the defense budget	Mayorov: The national economy has priority	Ogarkov, Akhromeyev, Gribkov, Sorokin: The whole economy must be healthy to support defense needs	Zaytsev, Petrov, Kulikov: Defense has priority
Attitudes toward technologically based troop control techniques	Ogarkov, Akhromeyev: Urging innovation		Govorov, Sorokin, Mayorov: Urging caution

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Articles by other Soviet military writers do contain references in support of operations by specific services, notably from representatives of the Navy. It is clear that some naval officers would like to increase the Navy's role, within the context of a "unified military strategy," and resent the marshals' indifference to the value of naval power. No such comments can be found by our 10 front-runners. It is important to recall that all of them have served in the Ground Forces, have been trained as combined arms experts, and are now in the General Staff Service.

#### **Differing Attitudes Within the Defense Ministry**

These areas of general agreement notwithstanding, there are matters of policy about which these 10 top-ranking officers appear to differ. These divergencies are illustrated in table 4 and are discussed in greater detail below.

#### **Toward Individual Party Leaders**

Despite their unanimous position on the subordination of the military to CPSU leadership, the emerging leaders we have identified do seem to have discernible differences in attitude toward the military duties of the party hierarchy. Ogarkov and Varennikov—who have special responsibility for the conduct of military operations—appear to be especially demanding on the subject of the military qualifications of the highest political leaders. Their writings suggest concern that the individual who holds the prerogatives of Supreme Commander in Chief should be fully capable of making competent decisions on military issues. In this sense, they view the CPSU General Secretary (who has those prerogatives) as not merely a political figure but also the country's highest military authority; and they might have strong views about which party leader would be suitable for this role.

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Varennikov, for example, was author of a *Pravda* article (February 1983) that praised the late Marshal Tukhachevskiy's emphasis on military preparations in peacetime, reliance on the latest in modern technology, and preparedness for a massive surprise attack (themes heavily pushed by both Varennikov and Ogarkov today). His thesis amounted to a relatively safe criticism of Stalin, who ignored Tukhachevskiy's vision of military needs in the late 1930s and later executed him. The article may also have implied a need for greater military competence in the political leadership emerging under Andropov. [ ]

In contrast, other military leaders (including Akhromeyev, Kulikov, and Gribkov) have not expressed concern about the military qualifications of the national political leadership. Their easy accommodation to personnel changes in the party suggests an adaptability on policy issues as well. For example, Kulikov has been a First Deputy Minister of Defense for the past 12 years—a period which, at the national political level, has seen the eclipse of Podgornyy and Kosygin, Brezhnev's death, and the emergence of the present Andropov-Ustinov-Gromyko regime. The noncritical adaptability of Kulikov and these other military leaders could increase their chances of retention or advancement if the political leadership goes through a prolonged succession crisis in the 1980s. [ ]

Govorov appears to be a special case. He, too, is a survivor, but one who appears to owe his advancement less to flexibility on matters of policy than to having the right friends. While all military achievers must ipso facto have benefited from patronage, Vladimir Govorov has singularly impressive connections. He is the son of the late Marshal of the Soviet Union Leonid Govorov, the son-in-law of the late Chief Marshal of Artillery M. I. Nedelin, and, possibly most important, was the special friend of the late General K. S. Grushevoy, a Brezhnev favorite who was chief political officer of the Moscow MD. With the passing of Brezhnev and Grushevoy, Govorov appears to be in need of a new sponsor. His career pattern suggests that he will put personal loyalty before policy considerations in any further efforts he may make to advance. [ ]

### **Toward Future Military Conflicts**

Varennikov, Kulikov, Ogarkov, and Mayorov describe future hostilities as an all-encompassing national effort requiring economic and social as well as military commitment. For example, citing the experience of World War II, Ogarkov says it "revealed to an even greater degree the direct link between carrying out mobilization and deployment of armed forces and shifting the entire economy over to a war footing and reorganizing nations' political, social, scientific, and other institutions." Under present circumstances, he adds that:

*Prompt changeover of the economy to the production of goods according to a wartime plan predetermines the necessity of precisely planned measures in peacetime and coordinated actions on the part of party, soviet, and military agencies locally.*

These four officers envision a modern conflict between the USSR and its principal adversaries as larger, more complex, and more destructive than any before. But they argue that the USSR, rather than giving way before the horror of such a conflict, must mobilize its entire society to meet the challenge so that, in spite of potentially massive destruction, it will survive as an independent nation. [ ]

Zaytsev, Petrov, and Mikhail Sorokin do not take this line. Their writings suggest a more limited view of any future world war, which they see in terms of a series of battles to be fought and won. They express no concern about the need for full national mobilization. Their outlook seems to be consistent with their experience as troop commanders, reflecting their lack of national-level service on the General Staff. [ ]

### **Toward the Uses of Soviet Military Power**

The conviction that the Soviet Union is a dynamic world actor with international military obligations is particularly evident in the statements of Petrov, Sorokin, Zaytsev, and Mayorov. All four of these officers have been involved with Soviet military commitments in the developing world. They appear to hold that—as a superpower and standard bearer for social forces

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alleged to be the wave of the future—the USSR has a right and duty to extend its influence throughout the world. In particular, they seem to argue that (while traditional military commitments in Eastern Europe and the Far East should, of course, be maintained) military power projection forces should be developed to support this international duty.

Mayorov has earned a special reputation as an “enforcer” of Soviet national dominance, first in Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the 1968 invasion and later in Afghanistan in 1980-81.

Akhromeyev and Ogarkov do not lean so far forward. As loyal officers, they would seek to fulfill all military obligations assumed by the political leadership. Their primary concern, however, is the preparation of Soviet forces for the possibility of a major war involving the United States that could escalate to include nuclear attacks on the Soviet homeland. Ogarkov has written:

*The Soviet state's foreign policy was and is based on Lenin's immortal teaching on the defense of the socialist Fatherland. . . . The structural principles and the nature of the training of the Soviet Armed Forces are directed first and foremost toward rebuffing possible aggression, inflicting crushing retaliatory strikes on an aggressor.*

Presumably, they judge that by helping to intimidate the West with these preparations, the USSR will also facilitate its interests in Third World areas.

A third position is taken by Gribkov, Kulikov, and Govorov. They share the view that Soviet military capabilities should be focused chiefly on the preservation of Soviet national security interests against the USSR's traditional adversaries in Europe and the Far East.

#### **Toward Defense Allocations and the National Budget**

Among the 10 front-runners, Mayorov has been the most forthright in acknowledging that the military is subject to the same rules as the civilian economy. Although he does not claim that he would reduce defense resources to invest in overall national economic health, his stated positions leave room for this eventuality, and he clearly emphasizes that continued growth in defense allocations depends on the health of the national economy. He has written that:

*The Communist Party and the Soviet Government will take care of the high combat readiness of the Soviet Army, providing it with modern weapons and first-class military equipment, fully guaranteeing material technical resources. But, the satisfaction of the requirements of the troops directly depends on the conditions and capabilities of the nation's economy.*

Gribkov, Ogarkov, Akhromeyev, and Sorokin also have argued in their public statements that the military must pay heed to the long-term capability of the economy to support defense. They contend that the military must make maximum efforts to use defense expenditures efficiently. But these officers part company with Mayorov in arguing that if the United States and NATO intensify their defense buildup, the Soviet Union must match it. There is at best only a remote possibility that these leaders would favor a temporary slowdown in defense production as a contribution to long-term economic health.

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The hardliners on this issue are Petrov and Zaytsev. Although acknowledging the overall problems of the Soviet national economy, they seem to condemn any reduction, even temporary, in resource allocation to the military. Using an analogy to the finite resources of the post-World War II Soviet Union, they have praised the party's efforts to strengthen the national defense:

*In this situation, despite the difficulties of postwar reconstruction, the Communist Party took the necessary measures to further strengthen the country's defense capability and increase its armed forces' combat might.*

This aggressive view is fully consistent with these two officers' activist interpretation of the Soviet Union's international obligations. [REDACTED]

Kulikov appears to be closely allied with Petrov and Zaytsev on this issue. In 1976, when Kulikov was moved from the General Staff to be Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Kulikov's continual push for defense needs without concern for the effect on other segments of the economy had caused a dispute with Minister of Defense Ustinov. As recently as April 1983, Kulikov has called on the Pact nations to "take care—serious care—to maintain our defense capabilities at the necessary level." He remains the leading Soviet military spokesman pushing the East European nations to increase their monetary commitment to mutual defense. [REDACTED]

#### **Toward Technologically Based Troop Control Techniques**

Although all Soviet commanders are highly interested in supplying Soviet troops with the most modern battle equipment, there are differences among these 10 leaders in the extent to which they want to rely on technologically based troop control measures, war gaming, and other mathematical modeling. [REDACTED]

Ogarkov and Akhromeyev support automated troop control techniques, especially because they promise a more rapid and efficient mobilization if hostilities develop. Ogarkov is far out front on this issue, [REDACTED]

Sorokin, Govorov, and Mayorov, while willing to give technological advances their due, believe that the effectiveness of technology is constrained by the capabilities of human execution. They are concerned that military planners may swallow advanced command theories whole. Sorokin has noted that:

*Military theoreticians are going in more and more for modeling combat mathematically. But can they really develop a model of a training process conforming rigorously to the actual mechanisms at work on the battlefield or penetrate the psychology associated with the actions and general behavior of a specialist at a training site under the conditions prevailing in a rapidly changing situation, particularly in one of those "points" encased in armor?*  
(S NF)

We believe that an important ingredient of their caution on this issue is a fear that decisions on career advancement will be based on scientific credentials associated with staff work rather than on command talent. To this end Mayorov comments that, although training and instruction can fine tune abilities, nothing can compensate for a lack of natural command ability and interpersonal skills. [REDACTED]

There is clearly some tension between Mayorov's view and those expressed by Ogarkov and Akhromeyev, and it may signal an apprehension that command

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experience has become subordinated to staff credentials at the highest national levels. [REDACTED]

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Its credibility was strengthened recently by Andropov's promotion of Akhromeyev and Petrov to the rank of marshal of the Soviet Union. This prepares them for advancement into positions as first deputy ministers of defense by providing the requisite rank. Finally, Andropov presumably would be confident that the set of personnel shifts described above would be well received by most in the military hierarchy. [REDACTED]

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### Prospects for Change: Three Scenarios

#### Scenario One

Some near-term change in the highest Defense Ministry positions is highly likely. Both Ustinov and Sokolov are vulnerable septuagenarians, and changes at their level will trigger a chain reaction of personnel shifts well down into the Ministry. It is impossible to predict the timing or the extent of these changes with any precision. Our best judgment, however, is that most of them will involve a deputy succeeding his superior in a routine fashion. On that assumption, we believe that the following changes are among the most likely:

- Ogarkov to become Minister of Defense (vice Ustinov).
- Akhromeyev to become General Staff Chief (vice Ogarkov).
- Varennikov to become the senior First Deputy Chief of the General Staff (vice Akhromeyev).
- Gribkov to become Chief of the Warsaw Pact.
- Kulikov to move to the Main Inspectorate.
- Petrov to become a First Deputy Minister of Defense (vice Sokolov).<sup>5</sup> [REDACTED]

This scenario would be consistent with Andropov's apparently cautious style of personnel management.

<sup>5</sup> The order of vacancies will affect the transition. For example, if Sokolov's first deputy minister of defense position opens before the General Staff chief slot, Akhromeyev could replace Sokolov—leaving Petrov in his same Ground Forces position. Akhromeyev is as qualified for Sokolov's position as he is for Ogarkov's. This, in turn, would affect other personnel assignments: Varennikov is fully capable of moving into Akhromeyev's General Staff responsibilities, but he might not be in as strong a position to succeed to the position of chief of the General Staff. [REDACTED]

These advancements would maintain the present orientation of Soviet military and political-military policies largely unchanged, because the successors have policy views essentially the same as those of the men they are succeeding. For instance, Akhromeyev is on record as being in agreement with Ogarkov on issues such as innovative command and control techniques and concern over the ability of the economy to sustain the defense effort. Thus, the current position of the General Staff on these matters would survive intact if Akhromeyev took charge. [REDACTED]

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Likewise, this scenario would require no change of policy on other key issues, such as continued Soviet domination of the Pact and the primacy of Soviet security interests over East European nationalism. The consensus between Gribkov and Kulikov is such that if Gribkov became Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact, there probably would be no substantial change in Moscow's relations with the other Pact countries. The replacement of Sokolov by Petrov would also auger for stability. Petrov's promotion would give him formal responsibility for managing matters in which he has long been involved—and is already associated with his predecessor's policies. [REDACTED]

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In addition, this scenario would continue the trend of segregating staff-oriented officers from command types in personnel assignments at the highest levels. Although the post-World War II period provides examples of line commanders who have headed the General Staff (Kulikov most recently), we believe that Ustinov and Ogarkov have solidified the trend toward favoring staff officers for the top policymaking posts.

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Their emphasis on new operational command techniques and exercises and on defense technology and weapons acquisition, plus their sophisticated manipulation of military doctrine, has favored officers with concentrated General Staff experience, such as Akhromeyev or Varennikov. The touchiness displayed by commanders like Govorov and Sorokin over technological command and control techniques suggests that officers with their command-oriented backgrounds have recognized the impact of this trend on their own advancement potential. [ ]

### Scenario Two

Other advancement scenarios are possible, though less likely. If Andropov left office early (through death, illness, or a challenge to his authority within the leadership), the resulting turmoil could upset the military succession process. For example, if the post-Andropov civilian leadership felt the need for a more adventurous foreign policy, they might seek new military leaders from the ranks of the more traditional troop commanders. Such a choice would not only displace the individual successors that now seem likely but would upset the present trend favoring those with extensive staff experience. Under these circumstances, personnel shifts such as the following could occur:

- Petrov could become Minister of Defense (vice Ustinov).
- Kulikov could return to the General Staff as Chief (vice Ogarkov).<sup>6</sup>
- Zaytsev could become Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact Forces (vice Kulikov). [ ]

Such an alignment could produce substantial policy changes on the issues in which Petrov, Kulikov, and Zaytsev have set themselves apart from their peers. These changes probably would include:

- An even more active Soviet involvement in the Third World, including the continued use of proxy armies and possibly the increased involvement of Soviet troops in areas of special interest.

<sup>6</sup> The special loser in this scenario is Ogarkov. More than anyone else, he represents the ascendance of these with a staff career profile, and he has shown special concern about the credentials of the person who holds the combined authority of Supreme Commander in Chief and CPSU General Secretary. In a contested political succession he might be comparatively suspect. [ ]

- A continued and possibly increased flow of resources to the defense sector at the expense of the civilian economy. This team also might increase the resources directed to foreign military aid programs and thus further increase the demands on the national budget.

- A substantial but unpredictable change in arms control policy. Neither Petrov nor Zaytsev has direct experience on arms control issues, and Kulikov, who does have this experience, is reported to be less than supportive of arms control efforts. Under their leadership, the military would probably maintain its dominant role in arms control decision making and might influence the party leadership to reduce or abandon Moscow's current strategy of emphasizing arms control agreements as a complement to its military policy. [ ]

### Scenario Three

There is a precedent for a third possible military succession scenario—one in which a qualified but junior candidate vaults over his seniors to a position such as that of chief of the General Staff. (In 1971 Kulikov unexpectedly moved to that post from command in Germany.) Although Andropov generally has moved with caution in making personnel assignments, his record includes some unorthodox moves. For example, he has elevated technological specialists into jobs previously reserved for political loyalists, thus favoring the advancement of talent at the expense of the traditional succession system. [ ]

Mayorov might easily catch Andropov's eye as just such an unorthodox choice. Alone in this Defense Ministry group, Mayorov has evidenced a willingness to consider promoting the health of the national economy over the immediate needs of defense. Andropov, or perhaps an early successor such as Politburo members Mikhail Gorbachev or Gregoriy Romanov, might find an alliance with Mayorov the best way to obtain the military's acquiescence in limiting its demands on the economy. Moreover, Mayorov has taken a very hard line on both Soviet international military commitments and the defense of the homeland. His role as the postinvasion "enforcer" in Czechoslovakia

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further enhances his reputation. From the perspective of Andropov (or a successor), Mayorov could be the ideal Defense Minister if the Ministry had to face a significant policy reorientation. Other military officers probably would trust Mayorov for his hardline credentials, even if they disagreed with him on specific issues of policy. [redacted]

### Conclusion

The military succession probably will proceed along the lines of the first scenario—that is, many of the current deputies will succeed their immediate superiors on a sequential rather than a wholesale basis. Because they share many of their superiors' views, there would be no substantial disruption of existing military policy. [redacted]

This scenario could be upset if Andropov purposely sought to change military policy by promoting officers who are known to favor certain initiatives and whom he considers able to preside over the Defense Ministry in a period of reorientation. Despite the overarching consensus on policy within the military leadership, there are divergent views on crucial issues. This situation gives Andropov the option of effecting changes in military policy by selectively promoting those who support his views without having to confront the military hierarchy as a whole. Such appointments would be valid indicators of future military policy. [redacted]

If this were his aim, Andropov could substantially influence the Ministry's policy orientation through the promotion of traditional commanders over those who have made their careers in the General Staff (though there is no guarantee that he would find many kindred spirits among these command specialists). Alternatively, Andropov (or a successor) could seek out a more junior officer of proven capabilities like Mayorov and use his intelligence and credentials to retool defense policy. [redacted]

We do not expect either Andropov or a near-term successor to interfere actively in the military succession process, however. The military leadership seems to recognize that the time has passed when the political leaders could with relative ease grant much of what the military wanted. For the most part, they seem to understand that the current outlook is for limitations on the funding, manpower, and raw materials necessary to defense; for significant problems in terms of the production, cost, and operational employment of new military technology; and for increased conflict with measures to improve the performance of the civilian economy. Moreover, the military hierarchy appears to be realistic about the need to maintain a consensus with the civilian leadership as it addresses these issues. So long as this vital consensus is maintained there should be no need for Andropov or his successor to confront the military and, as a result, its leaders should expect their succession to proceed along conventional lines. [redacted]

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